



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737-1232 • Voice (301) 734-7799 • Web: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>

Rachel Iadicicco (301) 734-3255

Angela Harless (202) 720-4623

USDA FINALIZES MINOR UPDATES TO BSE MINIMAL-RISK COUNTRIES REGULATIONS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 18, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is amending its regulations regarding the importation of animals and animal products. APHIS is removing several restrictions regarding animal identification and ruminant materials processing from regions that present a minimal risk of introducing bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) into the United States.

This amended rule makes final several nonsubstantial changes from a proposed rule published in the Aug. 9, 2006, *Federal Register*. Under this amended rule, APHIS is allowing:

- The unique individual identification of animals by means other than ear tags, provided the APHIS Administrator has approved the manner of identification for the type of animal intended for importation and the identification is traceable to the premises of origin of the animal;
- The importation of hide-derived--in addition to bone-derived--gelatin for any use, provided certain conditions are met; and
- Nonruminant material that is processed in BSE minimal-risk regions to be processed in facilities that also process material derived from ruminants from the minimal-risk region.

APHIS is updating this rule to remove these restrictions because they provide no additional safeguards against the introduction of BSE into the United States. These changes update a March 7, 2005, rule that established regions with effective BSE prevention and detection measures, termed minimal-risk regions and conditions for safely importing live ruminants and ruminant products from such regions. Canada is currently the only country that USDA has concluded meets the requirements for a minimal-risk region.

Related to this, on Nov. 19, 2007, APHIS established conditions for the importation of certain bovines and bovine commodities from BSE minimal-risk regions that had not been made eligible for importation by the first rule.

Human health in the United States is protected by a system of interlocking safeguards that ensure the safety of U.S. beef. The most important of these safeguards is the ban on specified risk materials from the food supply. Canada has similar safeguards in place.

Notice of this action was published in the Jan. 18 *Federal Register*. The final rule becomes effective Feb. 18.

Note to Reporters: USDA news releases, program announcements and media advisories are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS news release page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/newsroom>. Also, anyone with an e-mail address can sign up to receive APHIS press releases automatically. Send an e-mail message to lyris@mdrdlyriss10.aphis.usda.gov and leave the subject blank. In the message, type `subscribe press_releases`.